

Sun Safety

Quick Facts About Teen Tanning

Is your child spending afternoons basking in the sun covered in tanning lotion? Is he or she going to the local tanning salon to “get some color?” It may seem like just another example of typical teenage vanity, but this behavior is dangerous. Here’s why:

- Cancers in children often go undiagnosed because doctors don’t think to look for skin cancer in youngsters. Unlike for adults, there are currently no set guidelines for skin examinations in children.
- One blistering sunburn in childhood more than doubles a person’s chance of developing the deadliest form of skin cancer later in life.
- The CDC reported that less than one-third of American youths practice effective sun protection.
- New research shows that even a mild to moderate increase in sun exposure over an extended period, with or without sunburn, may significantly spur the growth of pigmented moles in children, thereby greatly increasing their risk of skin cancers.
- Less than half of all teenagers use sunscreen.
- One out of three teenagers say they tan because it looks healthy. In fact, in an AAD survey, more than 80 percent of people aged 25 and younger said they looked better with a tan.
- The skin of teens is thought to be more vulnerable than adults’. Teens may be especially susceptible to skin cancer because their cells are dividing and changing more rapidly than those of adults.
- A 2002 study in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute found that using indoor tanning devices increased the risk of skin cancers – 2.5 times for squamous cell carcinoma and 1.5 times for basal cell carcinoma – compared with nonusers.
- 37 percent of white female adolescents and over 11 percent of white male adolescents between 13 and 19 years old in the U.S. have used tanning booths.
- It is estimated that 2.3 million teens visit a tanning salon at least once a year.
- In Ontario, Canada, public health officials launched a campaign to outlaw tanning bed use except for medical purposes, after learning that tanning salons were catering to children as young as eight.
- Many states now require parental consent for tanning booth patrons aged 14 to 17. Several states have banned indoor tanning for those under 14, and others are considering such measures.

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